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SUBJECT: Attack on Labor Activist - Consul General Expresses U.S.  
Concern to Guangdong Provincial Officials

REF: A) 07 GUANGZHOU 1268, B) GUANGZHOU 26

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: At the request of Embassy Beijing, the Consul  
General Goldberg formally expressed U.S. concern about the physical  
attack on Huang Qingnan, the Director of Dongzhe Work Safety and  
Health Center, to Guangdong provincial officials. He urged them to  
look into Huang's case as well as into the cases of others who have  
similarly been abused, threatened or attacked while working on  
behalf of China's workers. Guangdong Foreign Affairs Office  
Director General Fu Lang contended that local authorities had taken  
prompt action and expressed the Guangdong Government's commitment to  
protecting workers' rights. He argued that the province's large  
migrant population made law enforcement difficult. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) The Consul General coupled his formal expression of concern  
about the specific case of labor activist Huang Qingnan with an  
observation that such attacks on those who are in fact promoting  
China's rule of law and building a harmonious society efforts  
through assistance to the most disadvantaged had in fact increased.  
(Note: As reported ref A, Huang was attacked on November 20 by  
knife-wielding thugs -- the latest in a series of escalating  
attacks aimed at closing the NGO he runs. End note.) He noted that  
it was essential for Guangdong's police and legal system to protect  
organizations and individuals at increased risk of victimization.  
The Consul General urged provincial officials to look into the case  
and asked for future updates on its status.

¶3. (SBU) Fu, who had been well briefed on the facts of the case,  
expressed sympathy for Huang but contended that local police had  
taken prompt action. He argued that undertaking an effective  
investigation had taken time, emphasizing that police had eventually  
arrested the man who orchestrated the attack. Fu explained that  
investigations had concluded that the main suspect had arranged the  
attack because he believed that Huang's activities had cut into his  
business profits. Fu also said that officials from the local Civil  
Affairs Bureau and Trade Unions Federation had visited Huang to  
express their sympathy and assure that he received proper treatment.

¶4. (SBU) The Guangdong Government, its law enforcement agencies and  
criminal justice system are committed to protecting labor rights and  
punishing criminal activity that threatens those rights, Fu said.  
He cited the new Labor Law, effective January 1, as evidence of the  
high priority the Chinese Government places on the rights and  
interests of workers, especially migrant workers.

¶5. (SBU) Pointing out that nearly 20 million migrants live in  
Guangdong province, Fu said the huge transient population made it  
difficult for law enforcement agencies to maintain public security.

He commented that many violent cases like the attack on Huang take place every day. He acknowledged that the local public security situation remains unsatisfactory despite constant effort by local police, but suggested that China was in a period of transition in terms of labor issues and we would really only be able to judge success as China moved toward better enforcement of labor rights.

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